

EMPOWERING THE CHARACTER EDUCATION FOR INDONESIAN PEOPLE IN FACING ASEAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY (AEC)

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Abstract

This paper mainly describes the importance of empowering the character education for Indonesian people in order to face Asean Economic Community (AEC). Nowadays, the Indonesian citizens have played a dominant role in meeting the Asean Community. Indeed, they will be the actors participating and implementing a number of public policies in Indonesia. As a matter of fact, AEC is the realization of the end goal of economic integration to deepen and broaden the economic integration through existing and new strategies using the principles of an open, inclusive and market-driven economy. Considering this, the existence of AEC can be both an opportunity and challenge for the Asean countries including Indonesia. The opportunity of AEC is it can be a single market and its productions will be more dynamic and accessible. On the other hand, Indonesia should have good preparations and numerous strategies to achieve the goal of AEC. Those strategies cover accelerating the regional integration in the main sectors, facilitating skilled labor and talents, fostering the nationality among Indonesian people, and etc. In accordance with the enforcement of nationality among Indonesian people, it is necessary to empower the character education for the Indonesian people since at an early age considering the values of character among teenagers have been lost. The implementation of the character education done within the family, school and community is considerably effective to enhance the Asean Economic Community in line with the principles of global citizenship.

Keywords: Asean Economic Community, Character Education, Indonesian People

Introduction

Nowadays, building a strong country requires more active investments, good leadership, powerful educational values and a productive media world. Humans have rights to respect for others. Further, humans are from different areas, religions, cultures and backgrounds. Regarding this, moral is essentially needed to create respects that lead to a peace among people. As a matter of fact, there has been a phenomenon of language accompanied by gestures, yelling, pictures, screaming that will lead to chaos, conflict, verbal and physical violence and possibly death. The language and statements are strengthened by media which have main roles to socialize and convey the message or communication rapidly. That is why the language users in this case the Indonesian people should be aware of choosing the words and using acts of discourse that could mitigate the conflicts. Moreover, they should be aware of the language use, pragmatic and sociolinguistic in a social practice to promote the peaceful life. Otherwise, conflicts, chaos, and violence will occur among them. This has been described by the demonstration occurring in Indonesia in the past two

months. The Islamic Defenders Front (FPI) and other hard-line Muslim groups conducted a massive demonstration that paralyzed downtown Jakarta. They demanded the governor, Basuki Tjahaja Purnomo or widely known as Ahok, to be jailed and the ouster of President Joko Widodo, whose party endorsed Ahok's candidacy in the gubernatorial election. In addition, they assumed that Ahok insulted Islam in his campaign speech on September, 27, 2016. Ahok's statements in a campaign speech that went viral and made public anger are as follows:

“Kaum konservatif yang mengutip ayat Al-Quran untuk menyatakan orang Kristen tidak boleh menjadi pemimpin tidaklah berkata jujur. Kan bisa saja dalam hati kecil bapak ibu nggak bisa pilih saya. Karena dibohongin pakai surat Al Maidah 51 macem-macem gitu lho. Itu hak bapak ibu, ya”.

(<http://time.com/4598716/ahok-trial-governor-jakarta-indonesia-blaspemy-islam/>).

The case above signals that the growing intolerance toward ethnic and religion occurred in Indonesia. Further, the tug of war between Islamist and secular forces in the country for decades threatened the nation safety. Considering it, the fear now is that Indonesia's democracy is being attacked by hard-line and ultraconservative groups. These groups are jihadists dreaming of establishing an Islamic state in the country through violent means, and groups seeking to push an Islamist agenda through political and social means. It indicates that the Indonesian people may lose the character of nationality that will lead to the loss of everything. Then, how this country can compete to other countries in Asean Economic Community (AEC) if it loses of everything. Therefore, there may be something wrong about Indonesia.

Having a look at of the phenomenon above, it is needed to find numerous ways in order to strengthen the nation unity and compete professionally in the Asean Economic Community (AEC). One of the ways is by empowering the character education for the Indonesian people since at an early age. Further, the government, stakeholders, and Indonesian society should realize it and give serious attentions and contributions for empowering the national character. This article will explore more about the character education and its implementation, determinants of character Education, failure evidences of character education and its Problems and the Power of Character Education in Facing Asean Economic Community (AEC).

The Importance of Character Education

Building civilized state required qualified human resources. They are humans of being capable, skilled, sophisticated of science and technology as well as well-characterized. Therefore, in order to produce the qualified and characterized people, it requires the character education from an early age. According to Khan (2010), a character education is the process of activities performed by all the power and conscious, planned efforts to steer students. Character education can also be defined as the activities that lead to improved quality of education and the development of the mind harmony focusing on teaching, guiding, and nurturing every human family in order to have the intellectual competence, character, and interesting skills. Character education has basically the same essence and meaning with moral education that is both equally aims at establishing a private child to become a good human being that is rooted in the culture of the Indonesian nation and moral values which can be interpreted as religious values. In addition, Spellings (2007: 3) argues that Character education is an inclusive term embracing all aspects of how schools, related social institutions and parents can support the positive character development of children and adults. The term *character* includes the emotional, intellectual and moral qualities of a person or group as well as

the demonstration of these qualities in pro social behavior. Further, Berkowitz (2014: 46) asserts that character education may focus on fostering specific character outcomes such as moral reasoning (typically through ethical dilemma discussion) or altruism (through service).

Having a look at the definitions above, it shows that character education is a national effort to foster ethical, responsible and having involved of the young generations by introducing, modeling and teaching good character through emphasis on universal values. Moreover, character education is not a “quick fix.” It needs long-term solutions leading to moral, ethical and behavior to our society and key to the schools safety. In other words, instilling character education in children cannot be obtained by the instant way, which means cooperation with various parties and community such as parents, family, neighborhood, teachers or educators and school environment is absolutely necessary. This is in line with the statement of the Character Education Partnership (CEP), the development of character is absolutely needed the cooperation between individuals and with the community. Character education is intended as a long effort and cannot be underestimated, not only limited to the formation of good personal morals but the study covers about how a child can behave in accordance with the values of religious teachings and cultural values that exist in Indonesia.

In contrast to the previous definitions emphasizing the similarities between character education and moral education of the essence of the meaning and purpose, Ilahi (2014: 116) explicitly asserts that character education has a higher meaning of moral education, it is not only about how to teach what is right and wrong, but also how to inculcate the habit about good things so that students acquire the understanding about what is good and wrong (the cognitive domain), able to feel good value (affective domain) and usually practice the value (domain behavior). Referring to these descriptions, it is clear that character education ranges widely and directly related to the habit that constantly put into practice in everyday life.

In addition to families, educational institutions or schools have an important role in fostering character education students because the school is a place and a pool of knowledge after health education. To instill character education should pay attention to the values of civility in the context of national life, character education means upholding the important aspects related to the sublime wisdom embedded in Indonesian society. This is confirmed by the Ilahi (2014: 83) who explained that the implementation of character education is not only able to build on an understanding of the formation of attitudes or character in the act, but also must accommodate local wisdom in the nation's cultural diversity. Planting local wisdom is intended that the students have a sense of awareness of national and state-minded, pluralistic and multicultural. The emergence of cultural modernization increasingly prevalent among teenagers can fend values of character education based on local wisdom when a child is not introduced, taught and instilled the values of local wisdom-based character education from an early age. It is a challenge for parents and educators to remain optimistic teach and instill character values from an early age so that one day they become the next generation of educated, character and behave in accordance with the teachings of the religious and cultural values of the nation of Indonesia.

Determinants of Character Education

There are several factors to consider in determining the success of character education. Mutmainah (2013: 93) describes some of the factors that influence the success or failure of character education. These factors encompass the character education goal, educators, students, appliance learners and environmental factors.

Factors of Character Education Goal

A business or educational process that does not have a purpose is a useless action. Similarly, someone who will achieve a certain goal, then it must seek how that goal effectively is reached. If educators do not possess clear objectives of character in children, the efforts made to be futile and useless. Thus, it can be said that this factor is an important factor in the education of character, because it affects the success or failure of character education.

Educators Factors

Parents and teachers are prominent educators for children. They are prominent roles which can contribute great influence to the development of children, especially in the form of exemplary character, encouragement and guidance of character education. Through the figure of educators, parents and teachers, the child will more easily get the character values and the examples they see immediately. Further, these values will be impressed and emulated by children. Hidayatullah (2010) emphasizes the core values that characterize educators, including the mandate (commitment, competence, hard work and consistent), exemplary (simplicity, closeness and maximum service), intelligent (intellectual, emotional, and spiritual). The statement above can be interpreted that an educator, especially parents and teachers should instill character education in children. They not only transfer knowledge, but also instill character values as a provision for the child's future life. This is in line with Lumpkin (2008: 47), which explains that the integrity and behavior of a teacher observed by the students and their teachers judge the character based on how they are taught and treated in the classroom.

Protégé

Children receive direct teachings and values of the characters from educators (parents and teachers). In this case, the child has the right to determine the way they would choose personality. In addition, their mental and character are not strong so it needs to be nurtured to get a good character.

Educational Tools

Educational tools can be interpreted as the media, methods, materials, and tools needed to instill character in children. An educational tool could be the subject matter, stories, moral, exemplary, songs and others. The tool is very helpful and has a strong influence for children to get the values of character education.

Environmental Factor

A child's life is closely connected to the environment. Moreover, the child cannot even be separated from the environment. Environment is a place where children socialize, gather, and play with the local community so as to provide a dominant influence for children, especially in their daily interaction. This environment includes family, school and the surrounding community. Family environment is a major factor in a child's life for the majority of a child's life is spent with the family and the education they obtained from parents.

Based on the descriptions above, it can be deduced that to instill the character education on children, the educators should consider the factors in which the success or the failure will give much influence.

Failure Evidences of Character Education and Its Problems

There are various problems causing the phenomenon of shifting character among young people. It was shown by the violent clashes among students. Their mindset has

been erroneous by assuming that the brawl is the trend at these times. For example brawl action carried out by a group of students at universities such as damaging buildings and campus facilities. That phenomenon shows that the action of the brawl is becoming increasingly unmanageable and commonplace among young educated men. Tragically, the action of brawl has penetrated in the society, giving rise to anxiety among community. One of the causes of the brawl is the decline of moral education and the impact of globalization offering the uncontrolled freedom and luxury.

In addition to the problems of brawl and violence done by youth, there are various problems which led to the shifting of the character education of today's youth. These problems include a crisis of character and morals. The challenges of globalization are so terrible if they are not addressed wisely. One of the challenges is the decline of moral values of the nation. Among learners, moral education began to fade. It was proved by the crime of teenagers some time ago. There was the murder of a lecturer conducted by his own students at the University of Muhammadiyah North Sumatra (UMSU). This was because of the thesis problem. Considering that action, it shows that the student has not already possessed moral values, moral, conscience and humanity. Moreover, this condition indicates that the fragility of the character and morals has struck teenager and the next generation. A Lecturer who should be honored and imitated was cruelly murdered by his own student. Sophistication and advancement of science and technology makes teens are tempted by the practical and fast value so the impact on their attitudes become lazy and restless. If the moral crisis engulfs the world of young people and education, then their future will certainly be damaged. Other evidences of the decline of moral values of students is the bullying in the educational environment. This phenomenon reflects that the failure of character education is not able to withstand the aggressiveness to commit acts of violence. In addition, forms of juvenile delinquency are like drinking, doing free association, acting gangsterism and drug abuse. Such actions are very alarming and disturbing the public that make people's lives are not quiet. Therefore, the guidance and direction of the character education has a major role in building the moral of the nation. In the educational environment, teachers should guide the characters not only in the form of the introduction of the norms and values of the characters, but also in the form of internalization and concrete actions in everyday life so that students can master and apply the character values in everyday life.

The next problem causing the decline of the character of the child is a crisis of religious values (spirituality). The erosion of spiritual values in students can be seen from the reduction in religious activities they do for example rarely read the Koran, rarely do the prayers, rarely attend religious commemoration activities, and so forth. Teenager now tend to prefer to follow religious activities outside like watching a music concert, get together and hang out with friends in a certain place, do motor racing, and others. Seeing this phenomenon, the background of family life that emphasizes religion is indispensable because it can affect the child's religious behavior in everyday life. In addition, the school environment also plays an important role in fostering spiritual values of children by teaching and instilling religious values do not only focus on rote learning and skills, but also actualize religious values in daily life so that the attitudes and values of spirituality can be touched in the soul and the minds of the students.

The next major issue is the crisis of cultural grandeur. Globalization can cause the shifting of cultural values of the nation, if it is not addressed wisely. The evidence of the cultural wisdom crisis for example, the rapid effects of excessive material culture (materialistic), hedonistic culture, the Westernized style of clothing. Other

problems are leadership and psychological crisis. Protégé requires a figure or model in the family and school, that parents and teachers should be a role of model for their children. Many parents want their children smart, strong and proficient in all respects with the instant way as to entrust the child to the maid, tutor or other person that they trust.

To instill character of the child, the instant way is not enough to improve the development of children's character. They need a parental figure that can serve as a good example and role model. Therefore, parents should set an example to children by introducing and taking children to the prayers, the Qur'an and other religious activities, encouraging, supporting and directing children to positive behavior, teaching children to think independently, taking initiative, and so on. In addition to parents, teachers also can become exemplary figure for children. However, the phenomenon of violence and immoral acts often occur among educators or teachers such as sexual abuse and rape. It is completely contrary to the values of the positive traits that should be taught to the students. Such actions also show that teachers conversely become an exemplary aspect of declining into a major issue in shaping the personality of the students. Thus, the education community and the family possess a strong influence on the development of students' character.

Fostering the Character Education Values for Indonesian People

In the present era, the deterioration of character values occur among young people such as the action of brawl, violence, promiscuity, corruption, and so on. To overcome these problems required the efforts of planting and teaching character education from an early age. Character education according Wiyani (2012: 12) aims at improving the quality of the implementation and outcomes of education towards achieving the character formation of the students as a whole, integrated and balanced. Through character education, students are expected to be able to independently increase and use knowledge, review, internalize and apply the values embodied in the character of everyday behavior. For early childhood, character education can be taught through the scope of the family, school (early childhood), and the community.

Hasan (2011: 17) explains that early childhood education organized to form the qualified Indonesian children, meaning that children who grow and develop in accordance with the level of development so that they have the optimal readiness in entering basic education and helping them achieve learning readiness (academic) school. The main point of early childhood education covers several aspects. These aspects include the growth and development of physical, intellectual and socio-emotional. In order for the growth and development of children develop optimally, parents and teachers should be able to cooperate in instilling basic values of character education as the value of attitude, religion, manners, courtesy, compassion and direct the child to behave in daily life so that positive and good characters can be embedded in children from an early age. The basic character values that need to be instilled in children from an early age by Wiyani (2012: 18) encompass courtesy, compassion, beauty, friendship, obedience, discipline, and self-reliance. If the code is already embedded from an early age, the other characters are more complex to be easily implanted in children.

Referring to the handbook of Character Values for Elementary and Secondary Education, the identified values of character education that should be applied and given to school children as has been described by Hasan et al (2010) are as follows:

Moral Value	Descriptions
Religious	Docile attitudes and behavior in carrying out the teachings of his religion, tolerant implementation of the practice of other religions, and live in harmony with other faiths.
Honest	The behavior is based on the effort to make people consistently trustworthy in word, action, and employment.
Tolerance	Attitude and action that respects differences of religion, race, ethnicity, opinions, attitudes, and actions of others who are different from themselves.
Disciplinary	Practicing the orderly behavior and complying with various rules and regulations.
Hard working	Showing an earnest effort to overcome various barriers to learning and assignments, as well as completing the task as well as possible.
Creative	Thinking and doing something to generate new ways or the result of something that has been owned.
Independent	Attitudes and behavior are not easily dependent on others to complete tasks
Democratic	The way of thinking and acting the same rights and obligations judging himself and others.
Curiosity	Attitudes and actions are always working to find more depth and breadth of something learned, seen, and heard.

The national spirit	Thinking, acting, and having insightful interests of the nation.
Patriotism	The way of thinking and showing care, and high appreciation of language, physical environment, social, cultural, economic, and political nation.
Appreciating achievements	Attitudes and actions that drove him to produce something useful for society, and recognize and respect other people's success.
Friendship communicative	Action showing a sense of happy talking, doing hang out, and working cooperatively with others.
Peace-loving	Attitude, words, or actions which cause other people feel happy and safe on the presence of himself.
Love reading	Habits of taking time to read the various readings are on virtue for him.
Social care	Attitude and actions of helping other people and communities in need
Responsibility	Attitude and behavior to carry out its duties and responsibilities, he should do, to themselves, society, environment (natural, social and cultural), country and God Almighty.

The Power of Character Education in Facing Asean Economic Community (AEC)

The existence of the Asean Economic Community (AEC) merely offers both chances and challenges in the future. The chance of ASEAN is that it will become the center of world attention with its geopolitical and demographic areas. Further, the political, economic, and cultural spheres are automatically connected to each other. Meanwhile, the challenge of ASEAN especially for Indonesia is a matter of developing human

resources, natural resources and cultural resources to meet the ASEAN. These resources will likely be achieved if they are adequately managed. This is in line with the principles of ASEAN creating regional economic and security stability so that each country is able to respect the sovereignty of each and keep the peace to create good neighborly life through the positive and realistic efforts.

Thus, the question raises is whether the Indonesian country has a readiness to face the ASEAN Economic Community and compete the other countries considering there are a number of problems or deficiencies such as the crisis of character and morals, the phenomenon of shifting character among teenagers and Indonesian people, the crisis of cultural grandeur, and so on. These problems will lead to dangerous impacts especially in meeting the Asean Economic Community (AEC) if these are not immediately overcome. One of the impacts is the loss of Indonesian identity as a polite, peaceful, high culture country.

Referring to these problems, character education, in this case, has a paramount role that is to uphold and foster peace, love, unity and harmony among nations. In addition, for Indonesia, character education in many respects can be able to a model or trendsetter in the world as a peaceful, strong, welfare country. Thus, the question is how to implement this character education to Indonesian people including children and students successfully. It needs to be emphasized that character education is not something old-fashioned and it is not a matter of bringing religion into the classroom. Simply, character education teaches children how to make wise decisions and act wisely. Further, character can be said as the "X factor" that experts in parenting and education have deemed integral to success, both in school and in life.

In connection with the implementation of character education at school, teachers should be able to develop hard skills and soft skills that will be beneficial for both themselves and their students. By fostering hard skills, teachers will be able to master knowledge, technology and technical skills. Meanwhile, by mastering soft skills, teachers will be able to get in touch with other people (interpersonal skills), organize themselves (intrapersonal skills) and develop team work optimally. If these skills are successfully transferred and instilled to Indonesian students, these students will be able to shape their character, take a confidence, manage the level of depression, have a creative thinking, and determine their life. Further, the main points of students' behavior reflecting soft skills such as justice, responsibility, politeness, honesty, communication skills, tolerance, respect for others and so on.

Apart from the role of school, family and parents have a great role in fostering the character education for their children. This can be achieved by giving the best model in behavior and acts in daily life. Through the figure of parents, students or children will more easily get the character values and the examples they see immediately. Further, these values will be impressed and emulated by children and will be memorized and practiced for their future. On the other hand, by mastering and implementing character education as well as hard skills and soft skills, the Indonesian people will automatically strive to develop themselves and compete professionally in the Asean Economic Community.

Conclusions

To sum up, the existence of the Asean Economic Community (AEC) merely offers both chances and challenges for Indonesia. The chance of ASEAN is that it will become the center of world attention with its geopolitical and demographic areas. Further, the political, economic, and cultural spheres are automatically connected to each other. Meanwhile, the challenge of ASEAN especially for Indonesia is a matter

of developing human resources, natural resources and cultural resources to meet the ASEAN. These resources will likely be achieved if they are adequately managed. As a matter of fact, there have been a numerous problems dealing with the character of Indonesian people such as the crisis of character and morals, the phenomenon of shifting character among teenagers and Indonesian people, the crisis of cultural grandeur, and so on. Thus, these will lead to dangerous impacts especially in meeting the Asean Economic Community (AEC) if these problems are not immediately overcome. One of the impacts is the loss of Indonesian identity as a polite, peaceful, high culture country. Considering it, the urgency of building character education to Indonesian people is quite required. This can be started by teaching character education to children. In this case, teachers and parents have a great role to form the children's character. If the character education is successfully instilled, the Indonesian people will be able to uphold and foster peace, love, unity and harmony among nations. As a result, by mastering and implementing character education as well as hard skills and soft skills, the Indonesian people will be able to compete professionally in the Asean Economic Community.

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